

Dear parent/carer

I would like to take this opportunity to write to you all to thank you for everything you have done to support your child's learning since March and, more recently, since schools reopened in September.

I would also like to provide an update in respect of a range of issues that are currently affecting schools, parents/carers and learners. I am sorry that this a long letter but I thought it would be helpful to provide you all with a comprehensive update at this time.

This note covers the following issues:

- [Use of face coverings by pupils using home-to-school transport](#)
- [Use of face coverings by pupils in schools](#)
- [Parents/carers communicating with schools](#)
- [Self-isolation](#)
- [School 'bubble' arrangements](#)
- [Free school breakfast provision](#)
- [Social distancing](#)
- [Pupil behaviour](#)
- [Attendance at school while showing symptoms](#)
- [Parking outside/on school premises](#)

### **Use of face coverings by pupils using home-to-school transport**

I would be grateful if parents/carers could ensure that any child of secondary school age using local authority provided school transport wears a suitable face covering. This requirement does not apply to pupils with additional learning needs or relevant medical conditions which constitute an exemption. This requirement does not apply to primary school-age pupils.

Schools have sufficient quantities to provide each pupil with face coverings. These can be washed at least 50 times. If your child has not received face coverings, I would encourage you to contact your child's school.

A pupil who is not exempt from wearing a face covering, but who refuses to wear one, or removes the covering while on board school transport, may be refused onward travel and have their entitlement to free transport removed.

Therefore, please make every effort to ensure your child adheres to this requirement.

### **Use of face coverings by pupils in schools**

Any child of secondary school age is recommended to wear a suitable face covering in communal areas in schools including corridors, halls and toilets. This requirement does not apply to pupils with additional learning needs, relevant medical conditions which constitute an exemption, or to pupils with disabilities. This requirement does not apply to primary school-age pupils.

Individual schools are responsible for identifying these communal areas and parents/carers are therefore advised to ensure that their child is following the requirements in place in each school.

### **Parents/carers communicating with schools**

If your child receives a positive test for COVID-19, it is important that you contact your child's school and notify them **immediately**.

Schools need to identify contacts of positive cases as soon as possible to reduce the risk of further infection and this information is not always passed to schools in a timely fashion by the 'Test, Trace, Protect' Service', so your support in informing the school if your child is tested positive would be greatly appreciated.

Similarly, it is important to note that local authorities have a duty, under the Health Service (Control of Patient Information) Regulations 2002 to support the management of the COVID-19 outbreak by processing and sharing information with bodies engaged in disease surveillance in order to protect public health, provide healthcare services to the public, monitoring and managing the COVID-19 outbreak.

### **Self-isolation**

If your child is asked to self-isolate by their school, this is following an assessment approved by Public Health Wales and therefore needs to be strictly adhered to.

Self-isolation means that the person does not leave the home and that no one who is not part of the household enters that premises.

I must remind you that sanctions can be imposed on any individual found not to be adhering to self-isolation rules by enforcement agencies.

If a pupil is in school when they are identified as a contact of a positive case of COVID-19 (either another pupil or staff member), you will be contacted immediately by the school to arrange for the collection of your child. It is therefore recommended that you make the necessary arrangements in advance in case of this eventuality. Even if your child is eligible for free home-to-school transport, guidance from Welsh Government is that this should not be used in such a situation. Only in exceptional circumstances will the local authority be able to transport pupils home from school if they are required to self-isolate.

### **School 'bubble' arrangements and self-isolation directives**

Schools are working hard to reduce the chances of COVID-19 spreading. In order to restrict the number of contacts, pupils are being kept with their own year groups and/or classes to form a 'bubble' which will be kept apart from other 'bubbles'.

Maintaining distinct groups or bubbles that do not mix makes it quicker and easier in the event of a positive case to identify those who are close contacts and may need to self-isolate and keep that number as small as possible.

In the event of a positive test being confirmed, those who have had close contact with the case are required to self-isolate in line with national guidance, for 14 days after their last known contact with the positive case. This could involve the whole bubble. This is to prevent further transmission of the virus; ensuring that if pupils (or staff) are carrying the virus (even without symptoms), they do not come into contact with others and potentially spread the virus further.

### **Free school breakfast provision**

The safety of pupils and staff is of the utmost consideration at this time and all primary schools are revising their risk assessments to determine at what point it will be safe to reopen their free breakfast provision. While all schools have made changes to the physical layout and their operational arrangements to ensure their school is as safe an environment as possible, some schools are unable to open their free breakfast provision at this time.

Therefore, while the local authority and schools acknowledge that breakfast provision is important, the reinstatement of breakfast provision at schools must not compromise the safety of schools and increase the risk of the transmission of COVID-19.

Parents and carers are therefore asked for their support and patience while these arrangements are adapted to allow the reinstatement of free breakfast provision on a case-by-case basis, in each school.

### **Social distancing**

All schools have undertaken risk assessments and follow [Welsh Government](#) and Public Health Wales guidance relating to the management of COVID-19. While every effort is being made in and around each school, I would request your support in ensuring that we keep school communities safe. In this respect I would ask that you continue to follow all national and local guidance not only in and around the school, but at all times, including current local lockdown requirements.

This is important as we are aware that COVID-19 is circulating within the community and we must all play our part in making the school community as safe as possible.

### **Pupil behaviour**

Please can I remind parents/carers that good pupil behaviour remains a priority within schools.

Schools will act appropriately should behaviour issues present and will use the necessary sanctions, including exclusions, should this be necessary.

Specifically, I would be grateful if parents/carers could remind their child(ren) that spitting will not be tolerated, as this clearly will increase the risk of transmission.

### **School attendance if your child is showing symptoms**

If your child is unwell at home with any of the symptoms of COVID-19 listed below please do not send them to school. The main symptoms of COVID-19 are:

- a high temperature - chest or back feels hot to the touch;
- a new, continuous cough – this means coughing a lot, for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours; and/or
- a loss or change to sense of smell or taste – this means they cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal.

If your child has any of the main symptoms of coronavirus:

- get a test to check if they have coronavirus as soon as possible; and
- stay at home and do not have visitors until you get the test result.

Please be sure to follow the [self-isolation stay at home guidance](#) from Welsh Government.

If, however, your child does not have symptoms of COVID-19 but has other cold-like symptoms, such as a runny nose, they do not need to be tested and they and you do not need to self-isolate.

Your child should attend school if fit to do so.

### **Parking outside/on school premises**

Pick-up and drop-off times can be very busy around the school due to the numbers of children on site. Therefore, I would ask that parents/carers consider the safety of the children when driving and parking in the proximity of our schools. Inconsiderate driving and parking can present a significant risk to both pedestrians and other road users, and can result in complaints being received by the school from both residents and other parents alike.

It is important that when driving within the vicinity of any school, you do so with due care and attention and do not put others at risk, or inconvenience residents around schools. I would be grateful if you could ensure that you drive and park safely in appropriate areas, even if this means a longer walk to the school gates.

South Wales Police have recently identified significant numbers of pupils and their parents/carers gathering on narrow footpaths outside of schools, particularly at the beginning and end of the school day. These congregations can force other pedestrians into the road in order to maintain a two-metre distance. South Wales Police have identified this practice as unsafe. Parents/carers are therefore advised not to form congregations and to limit the time they spend in the proximity of schools.

I would want to reassure you that the local authority is working closely with the leadership of all schools in order for them to remain open in accordance with Welsh Government guidance. Senior leaders in all schools are working hard to ensure that the whole school community remains safe.

Risk assessments are regularly reviewed and are amended in light of the latest guidance received in order to minimise any risks. I appreciate that this is an anxious time for families and your co-operation is much appreciated.

Thank you, once again, for your ongoing support.

Lindsay